Human Events *A Weekly Analysis for the American Citizen*
Editorial Office 1710 Rhode Island Ave., N. W., WASHINGTON 6, D. C. *Telephone* NATIONAL 2066
VOL. VI, NO. 23, *Issue Number* 280, JUNE 8, 1949 ★ *Editors:* FELIX MORLEY [illegible] HANIGHEN

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POLITICS, ECONOMICS AND GOVERNMENT

by James D. Mooney

The study of governmental structure is meaningless without parallel consideration of political, social, and economic interrelations among those governed.

While many facile writers and speechmakers have been battling passionately about Communism, Fascism, Socialism and Democracy, the actual operation of governmental organizations forces the conclusion that there is little value to these terms as such.

Indeed, it may be asserted that not only in different countries, but also from generation to generation, men go on organizing their governments and earning their livings in essentially the same manner. Notable changes and improvements can be credited from time to time to the scientists and engineers, and to improved technology. But throughout history economic laws and the processes of production and distribution display utter contempt for changes in the form of government.

Farming, spinning, weaving, shoemaking, shipbuilding, manufacturing motorcars, operation of railroads, department stores, food and other exchanges all display no more variation in different countries than can be discovered within the boundaries of any one. In other words, they show no differentiation that can be ascribed to political divisions. These processes of production and distribution vary only according to the degree in which methods have been changed through the use of tools, technology, and the ability to organize on a vast and effective scale.

In appraising the many experiments in governmental structure, tried currently throughout the world, it is important that we should not be deceived by the different symbols around which various political movements seek to rally supporters.

The vital point is that, once the controlling group gets power, practical circumstance forces the new leaders to organize government according to principles as old as the hills.

Meanwhile, and particularly since the middle of the Nineteenth Century when the Industrial Revolution got into high gear and brought economic issues sharply to the fore in the Western world, politicians have pre-empted or achieved authority by putting forth one economic plea or another to the masses. Symbols for better food, clothing, and shelter

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are always useful in inspiring either bloody or bloodless revolutions. History shows that empty bellies have always been powerful generators of political change.

II

The enduring objectives of government are: (1) national defense; (2) internal order; (3) improved standards of living. National defense, because of disturbed political conditions throughout the world, is today the first consideration; and an improved standard of living is the second. Internal order, at least with us, is more or less assumed.

After national security, people everywhere want more to eat and a greater variety of things to eat. They want more clothes and more shoes. They want more comfortable places in which to live. All governments are seriously concerned with policies which will provide group movement toward these ends.

In the ideal State, the consumer's interests would be placed above all else. It would be fully understood that only a vigorous production or transformation of raw materials into consumer's goods, and the efficient distribution of these goods, can create a high standard of living. It would be realized that what is inimical to the interests of the consumer is ultimately detrimental to the interests of industry. Profiteering -- charging more for the goods or services than they are worth in the free market -- would be discouraged. Racketeering -- the levying of tolls on industry for no service at all -- would be banned.

The government would stick to its natural functions of maintaining order and security at home and of providing a defense against external enemies. By limiting the extension of its activity, and by performing its appropriate functions with thrift, government would remove from production that heavy hand of taxation which has been the cause of the traditional clash between administrators and producers.

Obviously, governments throughout the world are not all alike. But the general structural pattern, the methods of organization under which they operate, and the general objectives they seek to attain, are everywhere similar. The principal difference between governments lies in the degree to which they are "integrated". By this is meant the extent to which control over the many areas of individual, community, and national life is centered in officialdom.

It has become the fashion for every newly established government to claim that it is projecting new principles into its operation, among which that of high integration is usually emphasized. Actually, a characteristic which appears in almost all ancient forms of government is

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the unlimited range of governmental authority and control. How ironic, that many modern countries should be regressing to the tyrannical principles of the governments of antiquity!

The degree of integration depends upon the amount of external military or internal economic pressure imposed upon the nation at the time. Military or economic crises set the stage for moving a country in the direction of extremely high integration.

History shows that throughout the classical revolutions the most important net result has been the change in the degree of integration.

III

Government cannot provide order unless it is strong, and in the United States most people want a strong government. At the same time, we are eager to retain the greatest possible degree of individual freedom. How can these objectives be reconciled? Order requires effective application of the principles of organization to governmental operations. Freedom can be maintained only through individual morality.

Defense against governmental tyranny is to be found in the traditional American two-party system, and the practical application of morality in governmental operation. Our political scheme, our two parties, the Democrats and the Republicans, have long given us a reasonably good compromise between a strong government and individual freedom.

To be practical, therefore, we must compare our political and governmental organization not with some imaginary Utopia, but with actual experimentation in other places and times. Many governments abroad have seemed to swing from one extreme or the other; either government is so highly integrated, so strong, so "full of itself" that the individual loses a great measure of freedom; or government is so weak that it cannot discharge its necessary functions effectively.

In countries with a multiplicity of parties, no one party has enough power to organize a sufficiently strong government when it assumes office. France is an example. The French have gone from one crisis to another, as a result of their disintegrated political situation. Likewise, one of the outstanding characteristics of Germany, during its weak and transient regime as a republic after World War I, was the multiplicity of parties which kept breaking up and multiplying until Hitler took over. A system like our own, with its two major parties, avoids this disintegrating tendency and gives ample assurance that either party, if elected to office, will be able to carry out the functions of government effectively.

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On the other hand, the danger inherent in one dominating party, unchecked by critical opposition, is obvious. The controlling party can swing to wide extremes of national policy without any check or counter-balancing force to bring the pendulum back to center. With the two-party system, however, the party of opposition should always be able to act as a check, a strong and effective balance, against extremism.

The two-party system, therefore, is in itself our best defense against the excessive governmental control implicit in the rule of a single, over-dominant party. In the other direction, the two-party system is our best defense against the weakness and disintegration that come with a multiplicity of political parties.

IV

From time to time, we shall have both external and internal crises which will provide the emotional background for the controls that strong government always seeks to impose.

The political choice we have to make is fundamentally between a highly integrated organization of government and one more moderately integrated. In time of war, or in other periods of really intense national crisis, the American people are willing to submit to a high degree of integration. But ordinarily they react against it.

Accordingly, I suggest to my fellow Americans that they identify themselves actively with one party or the other, as indicated by their own interests and convictions. Intelligent, thinking citizens should lend their full support to the party of their choice, and in turn expect from that party reasonable application of their political viewpoint.

Only in this way can Americans erect a sure and safe defense against too high an integration of our government, against the over-reaching governmental controls which deaden initiative and creative enterprise, crush us with taxes, and rob us of our freedom.

Even if a highly integrated governmental organization could actually guarantee a higher standard of living, the vast majority of Americans would prefer to risk a somewhat lower standard of living with more liberty to live their own lives. There are still millions of Americans who like the privilege, when in the mood, of lying under a tree and gazing dreamily at the sky.

James D. Mooney, author of Principles of Organization and other books, was formerly in charge of overseas operations for General Motors and, until recently, President of Willys-Overland.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. VI, No. 23

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By Frank C. Hanighen June 8, 1949

MURRAY BILL: The Spence ("In Stalin's Footsteps") bill is raising its ugly countenance again -- this time under the rubric of "the Murray bill". On February 23, this column signalled the approach of the Spence bid for totalitarian rule, and in HUMAN EVENTS, on March 9, Mr. Morley gave the matter extended examination in an analysis. Now it is believed that the unveiling of Spence's blueprint for totalitarianism was a case of "jumping the gun", without the consent of Commissar Leon Keyserling. The barometric change, from "inflation" (the pretense for the Spence bill) to deflation, was already under way. Since then, Keyserling and colleagues have seen the need of rearranging the superfices of their demand for controls, and today the rearrangement is knocking about the office of Senator Murray of Montana. It is reported that the proposed Murray bill will have more than a touch of the Unemployment Act of 1946. That measure at first unblushingly called for "full employment" at "top wages", but was later given the more modest phraseology of a "satisfactory wage" and "high-level employment". But the principle of wide Government planning of the economy to maintain "high-level employment" was incorporated and now again informs the so-called Murray legislation.

Now whether the new guise of the "Stalin's Footsteps" bill will actually reach the floors of Congress remains to be seen. Its outlines have been revealed in press columns in the past week, and have stirred no little adverse reaction. Even the Washington Post, usually tender towards the "progressive" ideas of bureaucrats, has strongly attacked the new version. Indeed, it may be that the commissars have been unlucky again in disclosure of their plans to men on the Hill. Murray is even more inclined to "jump the gun" than was Spence. The Montanan has not basked in any spotlight this session and, although a staunch Truman supporter, has failed to get the chairmanship of a standing committee. This hurts, and what makes it worse is that the Majority leadership has taken away his special committee for small business. Such a forlorn figure would naturally talk big to any idle reporter who dropped in on a dull day. Anyway, we have been vouchsafed another preview of what the bureaucracy has in store for us.

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BRITAIN: The British political situation is moving much more rapidly, in tempo with the deteriorating economic situation. Some observers, who had believed that the Socialist Government would hold the general election next Spring and easily triumph, have recently altered this view. Attlee may decide on an earlier date for polling, perhaps this coming Fall. The theory is that the longer the Government waits, the worse will be economic conditions and, ergo, the Government's chances of winning. Lord Strabolgi, a Socialist, this week urged calling the election in October, for these reasons; and, we have noted, other British Socialists concede that the Government could only win by a greatly reduced majority, even in an early election.

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RECESSION: There are so many prophets of doom and depression these days that we are happy to present quite an optimistic view of the American business situation. It comes from Dr. W. Woytinsky, formerly economist with the Social Security Administration, and one of the few Government economists who called the turn correctly in 1945. Today, he discounts not only a depression, but even a severe recession. In the April 30 issue of The New Leader, Woytinsky writes as follows:

"In terms of the chronology of economic development after World War I, we are not approaching the 1921 phase, but are in the midst of it -- traversing this cri-

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tical stage on an exceptionally high level of employment and production, with a good chance of reaching the next phase without substantial losses. . . . This time the adjustment is likely to be comparatively easy since the deflationary spiral . . . is unlikely to develop. It is unlikely to come, due to the considerable backlog demand in key industries such as building construction, automobiles, iron and steel, and in view of considerable reserves of purchasing power in the nation . . . In addition, as mentioned, many industries have already passed through their readjustment period, and the margin of profits is now so wide that its reduction will not knock out the private enterprise economy. . . . For all these reasons a recession comparable in severity to that in 1921 is out of the question. . . .

"The probable developments", says Woytinsky, "in the next several months are as follows: prices retreating here and there, layoffs in various industries and various parts of the country, a slight rise in unemployment, practically no loss in wage rates. This movement will level off -- possibly by the summer. After this spell of hesitation we shall enter an era of post-war expansion analogous to the 1920's. Our foresight and discipline will determine how long this era will last and how it will end."

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FARM SENTIMENT: The Administration will court farm support this coming week end at the Des Moines Democratic rally. It will have to talk in much more persuasive terms than previously, if a corn-state poll which we have seen is any indication of popular feeling on the prairies. The Omaha World Herald, some weeks ago, printed a questionnaire on legislation before Congress and urged readers to mark and send ballots to their Representatives and Senators. The offices of Senators Wherry and Butler have to date reported the sentiment on the Brannan farm plan as follows: for -- 174; against -- 8,737. Balloting on other domestic issues had the following results. A straight 10 per cent cut on all Federal expenditures that can be cut: for -- 8,740; against -- 287. National Health Plan: for -- 166; against -- 8,800. Federal Housing Plan: for -- 360; against 8,456. Federal aid to education: for -- 800; against -- 8,093. Increased income and pay roll taxes: for -- 167; against -- 8,827. Apparently, Nebraskans are far from convinced of the necessity of the Truman program.

Is the above tabulation a fair expression of farm state sentiment? As a matter of fact, some reservations should be made. In the first place, Nebraska has long been a conservative, Republican state. Next, too many of the ballots obviously come from small towns rather than from the RFD routes. A town dweller is much more likely to mail a ballot than the man who, after a day of hard toil in the fields, relaxes to read his newspaper. Finally, there is an element among the farmers, the "unsuccessful" and "marginal" farmers, which at present is not very vocal but may become so as farm prices retreat. Nevertheless, despite all these factors, the preponderance of farm opposition shown in the poll is very impressive.

We talked with Carl Curtis, Representative from the 1st Congressional District in Nebraska, which is largely agricultural. He let us look at some of the ballots and accompanying letters, and he offered some interesting interpretations. Here's a ballot from a school superintendent: against everything on the Truman program, including aid-to-education. However, one of his teachers gave complete approval to the program, railing against the "rich". Then here's a printer who gets out a county weekly -- he's strongly against all the Administration wants. So is the wealthy banker in the same town. Then there's a grain elevator clerk who is definitely "against", with some bitter remarks about taxes. Here's another banker, described as "virtually bankrupt". He happens to be a life-long Democrat. But the fact that this individual also is "against" suggests that not only the "successful",

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and not only Republicans, oppose paternalism. A lady who runs a "notion shop" also is "against", but expresses the belief that the Administration's housing plan may be "all right". And here are more ballots from the farms -- mostly from "successful" farmers, and all registering negative votes.

Congressman Curtis, who knows every crossroads in his district, gave us a fascinating picture of the currents of self-interest behind ballots and letters. "Many of the 'against' voters", he says, "are influenced by their physician. When the doctor closes his bag, they ask his opinions on the political scene. They heed his views on political just as much as on physical ailments. And he's usually a conservative." That school superintendent doesn't like Federal aid-to-education, partly because he knows it means that the Federal officials will encroach on his authority over his teachers, and the way he runs things. That teacher who likes the "fair deal" is a "crackpot", a perennial writer of letters to the Congressman. This type is always discounted in evaluating Congressional mail -- the average voter rarely writes in. The printer mentioned is influenced by the ideas of his banker; if his machine breaks down, he must ask for a loan. This banker has a reputation for treating his borrowers fairly; but if he were grasping, then all the townsfolk would be against him, and probably against his conservative ideas as well.

The farmers in his district, according to Mr. Curtis, oppose the Brannan Plan because of controls. "I put it up to them", said Curtis, "this way. Do you want just 90 per cent of parity, without controls but with the possibility of somewhat lower prices? Or do you want the Brannan Plan with guaranteed high prices, but strict controls? In almost every case, the farmer says he would prefer to risk somewhat lower prices for the privilege of being free from controls. But he does want 90 per cent of parity price supports."

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SPAIN: Consistent asininity continues to be the most visible aspect of the conduct of our affairs abroad. Some weeks ago, Mr. Acheson contrived to stand on his head with a fine pretense of dignity, in his explanation of our policy towards Spain. He said that we cannot send an Ambassador to Madrid (although we have a Chargé there), because Franco doesn't recognize the right of habeas corpus. When asked why, then, do we keep an Ambassador in Moscow, where habeas corpus has been unheard of since the days of Kerensky, Acheson dismissed the question derisively as "dialectics". Today, Spain continues to furnish the inspiration for additional farcical attitudes among our officials.

According to press agencies during the past week, one reason cited by the Export-Import Bank for refusing a loan to Spain was that the Spanish Government allocates too large a share of its budget to its armed services. It is about time to invoke the proverbial man-from-Mars, or in this instance the man-from-Madrid, to study his amazement at the way our logic works. He would arrive on a day when Secretary of Defense Johnson demands $15 billion and not a cent less, out of an approximately $40 billion overall budget; and at a moment when Congress and the Executive show a studious preoccupation when Mr. Herbert Hoover demands a cut in military expenditures.

But the visitor from Madrid is subjected to still another shock. It is reported that ECA officials have had to curtail a curriculum designed to educate European officials in the proper, American way of doing things. The ECA is bringing over some transatlantic bureaucrats to study the U.S. Government. One of the "courses" outlined was a study of the American budget and how we balance it. Today, as a deficit looms for fiscal 1950, the ECA has hurriedly consigned this course to the dust heap.

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Book Events

Creed or Chaos? by Dorothy L. Sayers. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, $2.25. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

Miss Sayers, an Anglican, has won almost as much attention by her writings about religion as by her mystery novels. This little group of essays, addresses and other papers, prepared on various occasions during the recent war, is a spirited defense of dogmatic Christianity, as distinguished from a merely ethical or sentimental Christianity that seems to have been engendered by the spirit of toleration. What Miss Sayers, as a theologian, may lack in subtlety and in technical precision is pretty well compensated by her enthusiasm and wit. Her main point is that without the dogmas, the Christian ethics have neither rational nor emotional necessity, that it is absurd, for example, to speak about human brotherhood without also speaking about fatherhood of God. The demoniac power of the new totalitarian philosophies and governments results, as she thinks, from their recognition of the importance of dogmatic belief. Their prophets have substituted a new dogmatism for that of the Gospels and the Christian creeds, and their adherents act in full logical accord with what they believe. The great conflict of the Twentieth Century is, therefore, essentially a religious civil war waged upon a world-wide scale, and must be fought to a life-or-death conclusion. This conflict differs radically from the European religious wars of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, since it is not a struggle between Christian and Christian, who in the midst of struggle remain agreed on certain fundamentals of faith; it is rather a struggle between Christianity and paganism, and nothing like it has been known in Europe since the days of Charlemagne. Beneath all the rhetorical confusions by politicians and journalists there remains a "violent and irreconcilable quarrel about the nature of God and the nature of man and the ultimate nature of the universe".

In this struggle, Miss Sayers believes, the Christian side has been at disadvantage because the true nature of the quarrel is misunderstood even by those who are ostensibly or professedly Christian. It has been weakened, for example, by the confusion of Christianity and humanism, or the cult of progress and perfectibility, which, it seems, is now discredited by the unmistakable evidences of an ineradicable disposition to evil in the heart of man. Miss Sayers tell us that it is the recognition of this evil by Christianity in its doctrines of original sin and of redemptive grace that should constitute its strongest appeal to a generation disillusioned by the failures of science to fulfill the promises of happiness and salvation made in its name. But these doctrines are in turn dependent on those of the Incarnation and Atonement. Thus the Christian cause has every advantage to gain and none to lose by a rigid re-emphasis upon these dogmatic foundations.

Miss Sayers' theology sets Christianity apart not only from humanism but from the whole ethos of modernity, and she appears to attribute most of its heresies to the late medieval transition from status to contract and the consequent degradation of labor into gainful employment rather than creative activity and the glorification of avarice as the dynamic element of social activity. The most engaging of the essays is one upon the deadly sins, where Miss Sayers plays very skillfully with paradox. She suggests for example that sexual obsessions of the modern man may arise not out of lust but out of the almost contrary vice of acedia, or spiritual sloth, encouraged by the boredoms of a society in which the creative principle of work is frustrated in the interest of avaritia, or covetousness. Indeed her argument in this essay is that the warm-blooded vices, luxury anger, and gluttony, are merely exploited in the interest of the cold-blooded vices such as greed, envy and pride. And the worst of it is that these vices, by the respect accorded them in bourgeois Society, have been commonly mistaken for Christian virtues.

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